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Reweaving Language and Lifeways in the Western Amazon

Georgia Ennis

On the western edges of the Ecuadorian Amazon, Napo Kichwa (Quichua) people have turned to what some might still see as an "unexpected" method to confront ongoing shifts toward Spanish language and settler lifeways—live performances and the production of various forms of media, including community cinema, radio, television, and music. Philip Deloria's work on Native engagements in technology—from automobiles to early film—continues to draw our attention to the ways that expectations of indigeneity often reveal more about the underlying assumptions of the dominant society than it does about the actual lives and practices of Indigenous peoples.[1] Such expectations shape still-prevalent ideas of the supposed technological incompetence of Amazonian peoples imagined as living in uncontacted, remote conditions. But these expectations may also be embedded in disciplinary approaches to revitalization that understand language in terms of distinction between *langue* and *parole*.[2] As anthropologist Bernard Perley has described, such approaches "dismember" Indigenous languages both into their constituent linguistic parts and from the communities who speak them.[3] In Ecuador, the academic dismemberment of Kichwa in language planning and revitalization has primarily occurred through language standardization.

In the province of Napo, the ways Kichwa activists and producers use media for language revitalization is also unexpected because their work expands the focus of revitalization from language as a grammatical code to language as a channel for the communication of further social, ecological, and economic knowledge. To focus on Kichwa media work as solely a form of language revitalization is to misapprehend the meaning of these productions. Amazonian Kichwa people engage in broadcast and performance media as a community-oriented and community-directed approach to cultural reclamation. Production, reception, and circulation of multimodal media

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events are, to use Perley's term, ways of "remembering" language in communities, which reweave indexical connections between linguistic and cultural practice.[4] Linguist Wesley Leonard refers to language reclamation as "a larger effort by a community to speak a language and to set associated goals in response to community needs and perspectives."[5] It was such a "larger effort" to speak their language that was at stake in media production in Napo.

In this article, I explore several ways that attention to ideas of the expected and unexpected in Upper Napo Kichwa language reclamation and media production can invite reconsideration of the approaches to language shift and revitalization. In the first section, I discuss some of the assumptions that may be found in academic approaches to language shift and revitalization. One of the most significant "expectations" at work in this case are the underlying ideologies and ontologies of language, which have shaped the methods and approaches of scholars—principally linguists and anthropologists—engaged in language-revitalization and -documentation projects with Indigenous and minoritized language communities.[6] I emphasize instead what Alice Taff and her colleagues have called "language oppression" to explore some of the major factors driving linguistic change in the Ecuadorian Amazon.[7] After these theoretical implications, I trace the ethnographic setting in Napo, including expected forms of domination on the part of colonial society such as territorial dispossession and missionization, as well as less expected forms of domination such as the well-intentioned use of standardized Kichwa in top-down revitalization projects focused on print literacy and oral standardization. I then turn to an unexpected site of reclamation—the fiber called *pita*, and the ways it connects historical and environmental knowledge.[8] Tracking Upper Napo Kichwa women's production of *pita* across multiple performances and rehearsal spaces reveals how performers and media activists seek to reclaim and revalorize language through other cultural practices and to create what Bernard Perley might call emergent vitalities for both.[9] By remembering and reclaiming cultural practices and environmental knowledge—like the production of *pita*—alongside regional language, the growth of *pita* in a local ecology of broadcast and performance media allows participants to reweave and extend their lifeways despite ongoing disruptions. Broadcast and performance media become a place-based, multimodal method for the reclamation of Napo Kichwa language and lifeways.

Revitalization Expectations

From a converted office tucked into a back hallway of the municipal building of the township of Archidona, the Amazonian Kichwa-language radio program *Mushuk Ñampi* (A New Path) was produced and transmitted via local broadcasting partners throughout the province of Napo, Ecuador, and into neighboring regions, as well as online. A small sign in the window, written in Spanish, detailed the program's mission:

Nos preocupamos del desarrollo integral de nuestro Cantón

Nuestra programación pretende rescatar la identidad, lengua, gastronomía y costumbres de todo un pueblo

We are concerned with the holistic development of our county

Our programing intends to revive/salvage the identity, language, cuisine, and customs of an entire people

Messages like this one, as well as the programs *Mushuk Ñampi* produced, opened a central question for my research: Why would a program that most people experienced by listening focus so much on embodied and material practices—like cuisine and customs—alongside language? Further, what did "*desarrollo integral*" or holistic development have to do with reclaiming identity and language? Topics like traditional and cooperative agriculture, hunting, food preparation, environmental conservation, historical narrative, and local music, among many others, were the subjects of *Mushuk Ñampi*'s daily broadcasts from the municipal offices. These programs were further brought to life once a month on live broadcast performances of *ruku kawsay* ("traditional lifeways," or literally "old life"), produced with communities around Archidona, in which radio hosts and community participants recreated and reanimated the living memory of the speech and activities of the early-morning guayusa-tea-drinking hours.[10] These programs aimed at reclaiming social and cultural practices that many saw as both integral to Kichwa identity and as productive forms of labor in a burgeoning community tourism and local performance industry.

I had arrived in Napo in 2015—positioned as a Euro-American woman and graduate student trained within particular ways of knowing the world—to study the use of media for *language* revitalization. Public messages like the sign on *Mushuk Nampi*'s door, as well as conversations with the producers and hosts of local radio programs, and observations of their different media events quickly made it clear to me, however, that much more than what I thought of as language was at stake in the media produced in Napo. During my time in Napo, I learned that language is transmitted most meaningfully through embodied and dialogic interactions, as just one thread of Kichwa lifeways. This is one of the reasons that interaction through and around radio programming proved so important for community-directed projects. I also learned that Kichwa residents of Napo continue to confront different forms of settler colonial disruption to their local environments and social practices, which shape patterns of language use and vitality in the Amazon. Finding ways to strengthen practices—linguistic and otherwise—that had been disrupted in Napo was one of the primary goals of radio programs like *Mushuk Ñampi*, and the broader ecology of Kichwa media to which they contributed.[11]

Perhaps if I had been paying closer attention from the start to what Indigenous scholars and activists were already writing and saying, I might have been less surprised by what was, for me, somewhat of a revelation at the time: that settler colonialism and social oppression mattered a great deal for creating the conditions in which languages shift, and that language revitalization goes together with other forms of cultural revitalization.[12] As Barbra Meek reminds us, "Language revitalization involves the reconstitution not only of some grammar but of the indexical orders that link a grammar to a complex of meaning emergent through a world of experience."[13] In Napo, reclaiming language is also about reclaiming those indexical connections to

other forms of experience ruptured by historical and contemporary colonialism. Napo Kichwa media producers and community members are increasingly reclaiming and reweaving indexical connections among linguistic, cultural, and ecological knowledge through performance and broadcast media.

There are several ways that scholars—myself included—who find themselves working within settler, institutional frameworks can misapprehend what is most significant in settings of language shift and revitalization. The tendency to treat language as an abstract system separated from communicative contexts and the failure to fully account for the oppression of speakers and signers of endangered languages are two of the most significant issues in contemporary language-revitalization projects. Despite decades of intervention, language shift remains a pressing issue in many communities. It is thus worth considering what Meek calls ideological disjunctures, "everyday points of discontinuity and contradiction [. . .] that interrupt the flow of action, communication, or thought" and how they shape the effects of language revitalization.[14]

In the Andes, institutional language planning and revitalization for Kichwa and other languages has largely depended on linguistic documentation, language standardization, and classroom-based learning.[15] As in other settings, these are ways of understanding language and language planning that depend on an ideological distinction between language as a system and language in use, which have shaped both the perspectives and debates of linguists and anthropologists alike.[16] Bernard Perley describes "the linguistic practice of reducing languages to their constituent parts" as a form of *dismemberment* of language, in that language is "separated into constituent parts and separated from the community of speakers."[17] As has often been the case for revitalization, an adherence to hegemonic ideologies of a monoglot standard and linguistic nationalism have been influential in approaches to language standardization and revitalization in Ecuador.[18] Although an important way to reach learners and establish institutional legitimacy for marginalized languages like Kichwa, language standardization projects in Ecuador have, at times, complicated language revitalization. Emergent from academic institutions, literacy programs, and the demands of pan-Indigenous social movement politics, these well-intentioned revitalization strategies have contradictorily imposed some of the same oppressive hierarchies between written and spoken languages that activists sought to overcome.

A further irony of such projects is that they often separate children and other novices from familial spaces of embodied interaction and pedagogy, transforming local ontologies and ideologies of language and knowledge. As political scientist Matthew Wildcat writes with his colleagues, "Settler colonialism has functioned, in part, by deploying institutions of [W]estern education to undermine Indigenous intellectual development through cultural assimilation and the violent separation of Indigenous peoples from [their] sources of knowledge and strength—the land."[19] Access to institutional education has been a significant goal of Indigenous Ecuadorian social movement politics. I do not wish to discredit the importance of their achievements to gain greater access to and control of educational programs in Ecuador, as institutional education has variably been used as a tool of national exclusion and assimilation.[20] However,

laying an Indigenous language over an external institution does not automatically "indigenize" the space nor the assumptions of how the world works transmitted within it.[21]

The ontological turn in anthropology invites further consideration of the potential misalignments in basic assumptions about the very nature of language and knowledge held by different peoples in language-revitalization projects.[22]As Jan Hauck writes, "For those of us working in contexts where we encounter communicative practices and language ideologies that rest on fundamentally different assumptions about what language is, we are often confronted with a disjuncture between our concepts and those of our interlocuters."[23] More than a simple "misrecognition" of the "reality" of language on the part of our interlocuters, Hauck suggests that linguistic and other anthropologists take seriously these very different understandings of the nature of language and that we acknowledge the possibility that when we "use the term *language* we may not be talking about the same thing."[24] For speakers of Upper Napo Kichwa, language is often described as a material inheritance "left behind" by the elders and "grasped" or "planted" within the heart.[25] Language is also a powerful substance, transmitted through the breath, that can affect the emotions and well-being of others.[26] The kinds of embodied pedagogies I discuss in this article draw together place-based practices dependent on traditional ecological knowledge, alongside language. Such pedagogies can link place and speech in ways that are particularly important within Napo Kichwa understandings of the essential connection between place and personhood, which I have discussed elsewhere.[27]

Land-based and otherwise embodied pedagogies for language reclamation also respond to broader preference in the Amazon to gain knowledge experientially. Eduardo Kohn has described a genre of narratives he terms "nature stories" told by the Ávila Runa, Kichwa speakers who are close neighbors to the communities of the Archidona and Tena region described in this article.[28] Such stories effectively illustrate a distinction between the process of *knowing*—and, by extension, processes of coming to know—and the stable, "habituated order" of *knowledge*. According to Kohn, these stories "are concerned primarily with capturing the experience of qualities and events and less concerned with drawing conclusions, discovering regularities, or making general statements."[29] In this genre and others, Kichwa speakers are particularly concerned with bringing the experience of *being* in the forest into their narrative performances using sound-symbolic ideophones and other linguistic practices in ways that invite their listener to intersubjectively "simulate the experience of knowing."[30] These stories invite listeners to draw on their own experience and knowledge rather than presenting generalized, ready-made conclusions, permitting listeners to repeatedly consult the experiential information and produce their own knowledge from it. Rooted in lands far to the north of Napo, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson describes how Nishnaabeg stories similarly invite their listeners to reflect and generate their own theories of the world. "This is how our old people teach," Simpson explains, in which theory is generated "from the ground up" through experience.[31] This approach allows novices to move through multiple levels of understanding—literal, conceptual, and metaphorical—as their own experiential knowledge grows through multiple events of knowing. Live performances, which depend on various forms of preparation and

practice, address a Kichwa preference for coming to knowledge through experience that is partly unmet by conventional classroom practices of memorization and recitation of standardized forms.

Ignorance or erasure regarding the oppressive social factors that lead to changes in the daily experience of Indigenous language use and vitality are another way that languages may be separated from communicative contexts by language scholars.[32] One of the primary consequences of the tendency to view language as a system separate from social life has been a narrowing in the methods and approaches to language revitalization to focus quite specifically on linguistic forms and language teaching. Many guides to language revitalization begin with documentation of what Keren Rice terms the "Boasian trilogy" of grammars, dictionaries, and texts.[33] Establishing a record of a shifting language can, of course, be an important resource for language communities—provided the materials produced are relevant and accessible to them.[34] Documentation can be an important method for language revitalization and reclamation, but revitalization is much more than just recording and archiving material for the future.

Drawing on his experience as both a scholar and community member working toward reawakening the Myaamia language, linguist Wesley Leonard describes distinct frameworks of "language revitalization" and "language reclamation."[35] For Leonard, the framing of reclamation is an explicitly decolonial practice that "begins with community histories and contemporary needs, which are determined by community agents, and uses this background as a basis to design and develop language work."[36] Rather than beginning from a salvage paradigm with the goal of codifying the knowledge of an idealized monolingual speaker-listener in a homogenous speech community, this approach asks what produced shift in the first place, and what constitutes meaningful ways of rekindling use.

Indigenous scholars have frequently reminded us that so-called language endangerment is not an agentless process.[37] Alice Taff and her colleagues counteract any such assumption in their definition of language oppression, which "is the *enforcement* of language loss by physical, mental, social, and spiritual coercion."[38] This can include more obvious forms of oppression, such as punishment for speaking an Indigenous language in school, as well as less obvious forms, such as the disruption of communal lifestyles through the introduction of "single family" housing.[39] Although home design is not always thought of in relation to language endangerment, understanding how settler colonialism and other systems of domination continue to reshape the social and material worlds in which languages are used is key to explicitly linking the concerns of endangerment linguistics and social justice.

Perley further notes a tendency toward victim-blaming in the rhetoric of language endangerment and revitalization, but also warns against thinking of Indigenous language communities solely as passive victims.[40] In Napo, I saw Kichwa speakers make dynamic choices about language and language socialization practices that respond to an assemblage of language ideologies and ontologies as well as material constraints. For instance, under twentieth-century land reforms, a subsistence Amazonian lifestyle has become increasingly difficult to maintain and less attractive to young people.[41] The expanding settler economy and society in the region has helped clear forests for

intensive agriculture and contaminated rivers with the extraction of oil, gold, and other resources at the same time as missionary and state-run education has expanded.[42] Shifting toward Spanish and away from Kichwa may be a response on the part of many to a settler social world where Kichwa and other Indigenous languages have been actively suppressed in education, labor, and many other settings. As experts who are also often outsiders to Indigenous communities, it is much easier to ask ourselves how we can "save" a language with "our" resources, while downplaying the historical conditions that distributed those resources unevenly. It is also these conditions that lead many people to adapt to dominant languages and lifeways to survive—or even prosper—in a disrupted world.[43] What might we—non-Indigenous outsiders and experts who are concerned with language diversity—have to change about ourselves and our societies to support Indigenous language vitality?

The complex setting of Ecuadorian language politics and planning draws our attention to the ways that the assumptions of academic and other allies in language revitalization can inadvertently reproduce oppressive hierarchies between standard and non-standard, written and unwritten, and national and local, as they dismember spoken language into standardized constituents, separated from regional communities. Language documentation and even standardization can be important resources for communities whose language practices are in the process of changing.[44] Language standardization continues to expand Kichwa into new domains and has given rise to new literacy movements.[45] But as a method for language revitalization, it does not always address the dismemberment of language from identity, community, and land that are fomented by settler colonial disruption. Ethnographic attention to the ways that people have been separated from their language and communicative practices is also integral for understanding community needs and goals in language reclamation.[46]

Locating Upper Napo Kichwa

This article concerns speakers of a variety sometimes described as Upper Napo Kichwa or Tena Kichwa, though speakers themselves frequently make more specific, place-based designations that ideologically link language, place, and family history.[47] In Napo, regional speakers of Kichwa feel themselves to be oppressed not just by Spanish but by the standardized variety known as Unified Kichwa, which flattens differences among the approximately eight regional dialects spoken in highland and lowland Ecuador.[48] Many Kichwa activists and disciplinary linguists and allies have embraced language standardization for both education and the promotion of political unification among diverse regional populations.[49] However, Ecuadorian Kichwa is also a collection of closely related varieties with varying degrees of mutual intelligibility rather than a singular linguistic system.

According to the 2010 national census, there were approximately 47,000 speakers of Kichwa in the province of Napo, Ecuador.[50] They live alongside a population comprising largely white-mestizo settlers, who were approximately 40 percent of Napo's 103,697 residents, and a much smaller population of Afro-Ecuadorians (fewer than 2 percent).[51] There are other Indigenous peoples living in Napo, but the vast

majority are Kichwa speakers, many of whom are now bilingual with Spanish, and some of whom may also speak other Indigenous languages such as Wao Tededo (Waorani) or Chicham (Jivaroan). Language shift toward Spanish is more prevalent among people in their twenties and younger, many of whom may passively understand Kichwa but who do not speak it regularly.[52]

Language shift toward Spanish is relatively new, driven by contemporary settler colonialism. Indigenous residents of Napo are survivors of cultural genocide and violence during the historical colonial period, but the region was comparatively peripheral to the colonial system due to its geographic isolation in the foothills at the intersection of the Andes and the Amazon.[53] Since the 1920s, missionaries and extractive mineral and agricultural industries have reshaped Napo and other Amazonian provinces.[54] Indigenous residents of Napo have experienced rapid and interlinked social, cultural, and environmental changes resulting from ongoing settler colonialism, which accelerated from the 1960s onward with national land reform opening the "unused" territories of the Amazon to settlement. The arrival of new settlers and industries radically changed Amazonian Kichwa land tenure practices, which had revolved around migratory, forest-based subsistence farming, hunting, and gathering on land shared by custom among multigenerational households.[55] The reshaping of daily life associated with changes in land tenure and the expansion of settler society in Napo has also interrupted the spaces for intergenerational transmission of Kichwa language and ecological knowledge.

Kichwa speakers in the Amazon are unexpected in common imaginaries that link Quechuan languages and the Andean highlands. As speakers of a supposedly "highland" language living in the Ecuadorian lowlands, Amazonian Kichwa speakers are frequently ideologically erased in discussions of linguistic and cultural diversity in the Amazon, which focus on more recognizably Amazonian populations such as the Waorani, Chicham, and Siona-Secoya. Although the history of Kichwa in Napo remains unclear, it is generally thought to have arrived as a missionary language in the context of the profound upheaval of regional Indigenous populations.[56] There are notable differences in phonology, morphology, and lexicon among the Amazonian dialectal regions usually identified by linguists, as well as more significantly between the lowlands and the highlands. These differences likely relate to regional histories of language contact and diversification. Yet, these regional histories are effectively erased by institutional language standardization, which flattens regional variations in phonology and morphology into what anthropologist Nicholas Limerick describes as the "deep orthography" of Unified Kichwa.[57] The standard was based on a historical reconstruction of Ecuadorian Kichwa, assumed to be spoken prior to regional diversification. According to highland Kichwa linguist Luis Montaluisa, who has served as communications director for the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, this means that some languages—particularly those of the Amazon—diverge much more significantly from the standard than others.[58]

The standardization of Ecuadorian Kichwa has also involved linguistic purification, in which loan words from Spanish are replaced by neologisms drawn from other varieties of Ecuadorian Kichwa or the larger Quechuan language family. Accordingly,

regionally significant terms may be entirely absent from standard language materials. This is the case for the word *pita*, which describes both a locally significant plant and fiber made from it, and which may arrive in Kichwa through Spanish by way of an Arawakan term.[59] Although we will see that this is a contemporary and historically significant product in Napo, it is absent from the Unified Kichwa dictionary distributed by the Ministry of Education.[60]

Some people in Napo see Unified Kichwa as "good" (*ali*) Kichwa and prefer it for both oral and written communication, while others describe it as a foreign imposition. Adult and middle-aged men, who are more likely to have attended school and learned to read and write, were some of its most frequent adherents. Meanwhile, elder men and women as well as middle-aged women, who are more likely to be monolingual Kichwa speakers without access to print literacy, also had less regard for standardized Kichwa. Serafina Grefa, a predominantly monolingual Kichwa woman who was in her late sixties during my time in Napo, described how her family refused to send their girls to the missionary school in town during her childhood in the 1950s, preferring they work at home. While her oldest daughters-in-law were predominantly also monolingual Kichwa speakers, the wives of her youngest sons and elder grandsons—in their mid-twenties—spoke Spanish and had studied Unified Kichwa and Spanish literacy in school. A few of her youngest grandchildren were Spanish-dominant and did not respond in Kichwa, although they always appeared to understand it. Such patterns have contributed to an emergent, intersectional triglossia in Napo, in which regional Kichwa speakers—very often elder and rural women, as well as some men—feel that their linguistic practices are being devalued in the face of Spanish and Unified Kichwa. The ways that Unified Kichwa has been applied in Napo as a standard language of classroom instruction, and often policed as an oral standard in public speech, are an unexpected manifestation of colonial language politics and ideologies where they might be least expected: within an Indigenous language, regimented toward Spanish interactional norms and structures.[61]

In Napo, children may study Unified Kichwa at school in second-language-style courses, but many children and young adults from Amazonian Kichwa families are increasingly using Spanish as their primary language of interaction. Language shift in Napo is directly and indirectly tied to both extractive and settler colonialism and other forms of domination. In Napo, missionary boarding schools helped disrupt intergenerational transmission of language and other forms of knowledge. These schools were once intended to "pacify" local populations and ease the transition to massive resource extraction in the Amazon.[62] Contemporary state-run Spanish-language schools and ongoing social, economic, territorial, and environmental marginalization have further encouraged the shift toward Spanish and entrance into the wage-labor economy. Many people describe the loss of traditional ecological practices and lifeways as a collective "forgetting" of their elders' knowledge. Napo Kichwa cultural activists use performance and broadcast media as a grassroots multimodal method to reclaim and reweave intergenerational transmission of language, and more than language, despite the various forms of disruption and oppression they continue to confront.

Participants in the Upper Napo Kichwa broadcast and performance media industry often sought to reclaim both regional linguistic forms and the social environments where language is meaningfully used that have been disrupted by settler colonialism. Theirs was a grassroots pedagogy that highlighted significant practices within intergenerational spaces in which linguistic, cultural, and ecological knowledge meet. The production of a natural fiber called *pita* is one such site that links language to social relationships and material practices that contribute to remembering and reweaving multimodal communicative worlds and Upper Napo Kichwa lifeways.

Woven Lifeways

"My mother would tell how her female relatives used to sell [*pita*] in Quito," reflected Serafina Grefa, a Napo Kichwa midwife and craftswoman at the time in her late sixties, as she pounded and scraped the long, sharp leaves of a bromeliad known in Napo as *pita* (*Aechmea*). The leaves can be pounded, scraped, and twisted to produce a durable natural fiber used to weave *shigra* bags and nets. Serafina tended an abundant *pita* plant close to her home, from which she would carefully harvest spiky leaves that were more than five feet in length.

The production of *pita* is not easy. Serafina and other elder members of the Association of Kichwa Midwives of the Upper Napo sometimes demonstrated different stages of this process to local and national tourists at their midwifery and educational center on the outskirts of the town of Archidona. Serafina and others would harvest *pita* near their homes and prepare different stages of the multistep process for demonstration and teaching. They also processed *pita* for their own use and sale. At home, the various stages of *pita* production would take Serafina several days to complete. After harvesting several leaves from her plant, Serafina would trim and dethorn them using her machete. After the plant was dethorned, she would pull the stalk back and forth across an upright pole, slapping its ends against the wood, which breaks up and softens the epidermis of the plant. Serafina would then peel the stalk apart, to split its skin from a thick strip of fibers. She would then bundle these strips together and tie them off with a discarded piece of the plant before placing them in a bucket of water to soak. After soaking, she would tie individual strips of fiber to a long wooden pole angled against the side of her house, then scrape the fibers using a small piece of wood to separate the green plant material from the white fibrous core. She would then wash the fibers again. After the *pita* had been washed and dried, it was finally ready to be processed into thread. This process was, again, labor intensive, as Serafina would carefully separate thin strands of the plant fiber, which she then twisted into compact strands and then into multiply cordage. As seen in Figure 1, the final stages of this process involved tightening and rolling the threads of yarn against her leg. As she explained the steps to me while working *pita*, Serafina said, "It is a lot of work. That's why we value our *shigra*," the bags ultimately woven from *pita* fibers and traditionally carried by men and women in the Upper Amazon.

Indigenous peoples of the Upper Ecuadorian Amazon have been spinning plant fiber into a valuable resource for hundreds of years, if not longer. The recollections of



Figure 1. *Serafina Grefa processing* pita *fiber in 2017. Photo by the author.*

Serafina and other older adults parallel reports from the early 1600s that Indigenous residents in the region around the mission town of Archidona were widely known as producers of pita.[63] Colonial records suggest that *pita* was already in use by regional groups at the time of the Spanish invasion.[64] Beginning in the early 1600s, shortly following the Spanish conquest, through the early 1800s, Archidona residents were forced to pay "tributes" of *pita* or its equivalent in gold to priests and colonial landowners.[65] In the 1800s, these tributes were transformed into inflated payments for trade goods that Amazonian Kichwa people were regularly forced to buy from missionaries and landowners.[66] Elders in Napo born in the 1940s and 1950s describe that their parents and grandparents were of the generations who continued a colonial practice of using Indigenous porters to carry goods—and people—on their backs across the Andean highlands at the turn of the century.[67] Like Serafina's relatives who sold *pita* in the highlands, many Kichwa people also traveled by foot, over the peaks to sell Amazonian goods in Quito, the capital.

Pita is also an extremely significant cultural item, despite its history as one of the many products that have been forcibly extracted through Amazonian peoples' labor. Serafina explained that during her childhood, *pita* was commonly used as thread for clothing. During my fieldwork in Napo between 2015 and 2017, *pita* was most often used to weave conical net bags called *shigra*, as well as to produce necklaces and other forms of ornamentation. The *shigra*, in turn, is one of the most recognizable signs of Upper Napo Kichwa cultural practice. Men and women alike sling these net bags across their bodies in the forest, to carry game meat or to hold foraged plants. Elder

and adult women frequently use *shigra* as their purse in town, though this style is somewhat less popular with young women for daily wear. *Shigra* are also commonly worn as part of traditional dress donned in formal, public, and performance contexts.

In Serafina's household, as well as in those of her colleagues and friends in the Association of Kichwa Midwives of the Upper Napo, *pita* production is understood as a gendered task. While she scraped the pita, Serafina continued:

Shina katushkaramari ñuka mamaga kwintak aka. Imarashami pitas aspisha, warmi tunu rashaga ganana anmi nisha rimak aka ñuka mama.	My mother used to tell of what they sold. My mother used tell us, saying, "You have to earn by scraping the *pita* and doing a woman's kind of work."

Historically, *pita* is reported to have been grown in more distant secondary residents further into the forest, where families commonly maintained hunting and gardening grounds.[68] During my fieldwork in Archidona, women like Serafina tended *pita* near their homes, as land reform has reduced the territories to which people had access. Many of the people with whom I lived and worked no longer had the option of maintaining a secondary home deeper in the forest, or they were unable to visit it regularly. Women are also responsible for processing the fibers and hand-twisting them into cords. It is also women who are responsible for weaving *shigra* bags, a task that they take up in the early morning hours while they drink invigorating infusions of guayusa. Mothers teach daughters to weave *shigra* bags by adding "daughter" knots onto "mother" threads, producing flexible and durable net bags.



Figure 2. *Ofelia Salazar weaves a* shigra *from* pita *at the Association of Kichwa Midwives of the Upper Napo in 2019. Photo by the author.*

Despite the importance of *shigra* and *pita* for Kichwa cultural history and practice, production of *pita* seems to be diminishing among younger women. Serafina was the only woman in her household whom I saw preparing *pita* during the year that I lived with her family, though she and her daughters also sometimes purchased *pita*, particularly colorfully dyed *pita*, in town. Serafina affirmed to me that she had demonstrated the steps to her daughters, and that they understood the process. Some young women in her household have transferred these skills to recycling soft plastics, which are hand-twisted into thin cords using very similar techniques as those used to create cordage from *pita*. Young women in Serafina's household now produce plastic cord from a variety of bags and other waste, which they weave into waterproof *shigra*, especially popular for use during fishing.

Pita has, in turn, become a major focus of cultural activism in Napo, woven through the regional ecology of media in beauty pageants, music, radio programs, and among the members of cultural organizations who often participated in local media. Cultural activists have turned to media as a vehicle to reclaim the production of *pita* and the use of *shigra*, a multimodal form of reclamation and remembering in ways that link together women's knowledge of their ecology and their economy.

Growing Pita in Napo's Media Ecology

The offices of the radio program *Mushuk Ñampi* where we began were just one node within the broader ecology of Kichwa media in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Despite enduring stereotypes of technological backwardness, Amazonian Kichwa people have a long history of using radio and other media technologies. Radio was introduced in Napo in the 1960s and 1970s by Josephine missionaries, becoming an important tool for communication between far-flung settlements.[69] During my research, Kichwa people in Napo were variously involved in producing community films, a variety of radio programs, a morning TV news program, music and music videos, live performances, books, websites, and social media content. Since concluding my primary research in 2017, I have also witnessed a fluorescence of social and digital media production from Napo, particularly as young community activists use platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter to spread awareness about illegal mining and other serious environmental issues affecting Napo. During my research, *pita* could be found across a variety of these settings. While individual events featuring *pita* may seem somewhat fleeting, its presence throughout Napo Kichwa community media served as an important way of remembering *pita* in ways that were often embedded—either explicitly or implicitly—in interaction. *Pita* and *shigra* have become iconic elements of Upper Napo Kichwa performance media, worn by women young and old in cultural pageants, at political events, during dance performances, in community cinema, and during radio broadcasts produced for live audiences.

Performing *Pita*. Throughout Napo (as well as Ecuador more broadly), cultural pageants known as *ñusta akllana* have taken on a significant role in public Kichwa celebrations. Modeled in part on Western beauty pageants, Kichwa *ñusta* competitions combine an emphasis on charismatic spectacle with demonstrations of culturally

significant practices or stories and public oratory.[70] These pageants often accompany yearly communal festivals. Winners of smaller pageants in local communities or organizations move into a larger pageant structure at the municipal, provincial, and even national level. Historically, such pageants have been closely connected to the National Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education in Napo, and use of Unified Kichwa in pageant speech was expected.[71] During my research, there was significant pushback against this idea in the organization of some pageants in Archidona, in which young contestants were explicitly encouraged to emulate the speech of their elders. The ways that these instructions were taken up by young contestants could vary quite widely, though regionally focused pageants tended to show less influence of standardized forms of speech.[72] Celebrations of *pita* are woven into this ecology of media, in ways that encourage the embodied remembering of the practice among participants, viewers, and listeners.

In Archidona, the cultural pageant held by the Unión de Comunidades Kichwa Amarun Rumi (UCKAR—the Union of Kichwa Communities of the Boa Rock) crowns the *Pitak Waska Ñusta*, the Princess of Pita Vine.[73] In 2016, the band Los Ángeles released the song "Pitak Warmi" or "Pita Woman."[74] The song boldly proclaims, "The Princess of Pita has arrived" and describes a young woman presenting *pita* at a pageant to audience acclaim. The song was a popular choice among contestants at several pageants in the Archidona area, who demonstrated the various stages of *pita* production while they danced along to it, eventually holding up a completed *shigra*. The song might also be heard at community celebrations and on local radio programs. The ideological connection between *shigra* and *pita*, traditional Kichwa cultural and ecological practice, and performance media reflects a semiotic process anthropologist Asif Agha has termed *enregisterment*, in which signs become linked to recognizable social personae or figures of personhood.[75] Such signs are multivalent, their meanings shifting depending on contexts and audiences, existing within what sociolinguist Anna Babel calls a semiotic field.[76] In Napo, *pita* and *shigra* have become signs of identifiable personae, pointing variably to traditional ecological practices, rural lifeways, as well as glamorous performance media.

During the election of the *Pitak Waska Ñusta* at UCKAR in 2016, several contestants chose to demonstrate the production of pita during their presentations. As they danced, the young women repeated compressed versions of the stages of *pita* production I have recorded with Serafina and other elders: collecting the leaves, striking and pulling them against a wooden pole to soften the fibers, scraping the flesh, arranging and twisting the cords, and finally, weaving a *shigra*. Prior analyses have treated such pageantry as somewhat spurious—as an invented tradition that is more ideal than "real." [77] What such analyses miss is that pageantry and cultural performance have themselves become their own forms of cultural practice for Upper Napo Kichwa speakers, which support emergent vitalities for language and culture. Although they play with forms that Perley has described as "charismatic indigeneity," they are also sites of what he has referred to as "remembering," which can reconnect receptive community members to social relationships, knowledge, and language.[78]

While dancing with a *shigra* or miming the production of *pita* may seem like it could have limited effect on a young woman's knowledge, participation in such pageants can have serious effects on young women's lives. Some women I have known in Napo have gone on to careers in Indigenous media and politics through their work in cultural pageantry.[79] Others have become involved in cultural revitalization organizations. Still others—including a young daughter-in-law in Serafina's household—have settled down to live the kinds of lives they might have once performed on stage—tending manioc and weaving *shigra* by the morning fire. Many teenage participants prepare for their performances among their family members, consulting with grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and cousins to plan. Their families may also participate in the pageantry, further drawing intergenerational communities together in remembrance around a focal activity. For some events and participants, their preparations may involve time on the land with elder family members to gather materials. Indigenous performance media and events can have a variety of seemingly unexpected effects that only come into focus with greater attention.

Reweaving *Pita* on the Air. In pageantry, participants usually present mimetic versions of the practices of producing *pita* or weaving *shigra*. Other forms of Kichwa performance media allow for a fuller expression of the interactional routines through which such knowledge is transmitted. They also allow for elder women to speak in regionally inflected registers on the air rather than with the standardized forms often heard in institutional media. On a live broadcast of the radio program *Mushuk Ñampi* (A New Path) from September 2016, the weaving of *shigra* emerged as an important part of gendered cultural knowledge, embedded in intergenerational interaction. During a segment on *kamachina* ("counseling and disciplining") of young people, a woman named Mama Olga led two preteen girls, a live audience, and listeners at home in a discussion of the production of *shigra*, guided by radio producer and host Rita Tunay. Mama Olga explained the importance of the *shigra* and how her elders had taught her the skill as an economic practice:

Rita:

Imara kamachinuk akai ruku yayakuna ruku mamakuna kay punzhayanakunai, Mama Olga yallichipay ña?$_1$	What did [your] grandfathers and grandmothers counsel [you] when the dawn was breaking, Mama Olga please demonstrate, ok?$_1$

Olga:

Kay ñawpa punda, ña waysara upikanchi.$_2$	First, we drank guayusa.$_2$
Ña chiwasha, kay ñukanchi ruku mamauna ñawpa kasna rasha, "shigrara awasha, mashti, katusha ganana anmi" nisha kamachikuna anmi.$_3$	Then after that, our female elders before counseled us, saying "doing [it] like this, weaving shigra, um, selling [them], [you] have to earn [money]."$_3$

Remember that Serafina reported her mother had counselled her that women must earn money by spinning pita, using very similar discursive structures as those in line 3. This suggests of a broader gendered discourse of subsistence and labor, which has circulated in Napo and which Kichwa women seek to transmit on and off the air. This speech is also significant, because Olga's voice follows the familiar phonological and morphological counters of Upper Napo Kichwa dialect, which are less frequently heard in public performances. Live radio broadcasts provided a multimodal channel for language, one which included embodied, oral, aural dimensions and which revalued the voices of elder and rural speakers.

Later in the radio segment, Mama Olga implored the young girls to observe the stages of *pita* production and to listen to her. Prompted by host Rita Tunay, the exchange also took place using highly enregistered routines for teaching and counseling, as Mama Olga checked the channel with the young girls (*payaguna*), by asking, "are you listening?"[80]

Rita:	Ña kuna ima waskara rurangui mama?$_{24}$	So now, what vine do you make, ma'am?$_{24}$
Olga:	Payga pitami, pita waska.$_{25}$ Kasna ñawpa pundaga virdi karara pitisha, aspisha, chi taksashka washami kasna tukun.$_{26}$	It's *pita*, *pita* vine.$_{25}$ Like this, first, the green flesh is cut, it's scraped, then after it's been washed, it turns out like this.$_{26}$
	Paya rikuy, rikuychi$_{27}$. Kasnmi, kasna rashami kangunaga shigrara awashaga kangunawak valirina.$_{28}$ Imas maykan, maykanbas katusha ganana tukunchi kaywa.$_{29}$	Girl look, look [plural].$_{27}$ Like this, doing it like this, now you all weaving the shigra [must] value what is yours.$_{28}$ What we sell, we end up earning with this.$_{29}$
	Payauna uyanguichi.$_{30}$ Ñuka ima tunus, ruku tunumi rimauni, ruku mama ashkamanda, kangunawak valiringawa.$_{31}$ Uyanguichichu payauna?$_{32}$	Girls listen.$_{30}$ I am speaking in the way of the elders, from being a ruku mama, in order to value what is yours.$_{31}$ Are you listening girls?$_{32}$
Rita:	Rimay, rimay.$_{33}$	Speak, speak.$_{33}$
Paya:	Ari, uyanchimi.$_{34}$	Yes, we are really listening.$_{34}$

During this segment, audience members and performers alike gained experiential knowledge of the stages of *pita* production—and the language used to discuss it. The stages of *pita* were displayed for participants and live audiences, while those at home relied on their knowledge to imagine the scene on the air. Learning to weave *shigra* with Serafina, I became accustomed to her prompting "kasna," or "like this," as she demonstrated the steps. Mama Olga similarly invites her audience to project themselves into the event as she shows them how to do it "like this" in lines 26 and 27. For

audiences who were not present at the live broadcast, such deictic expressions pointing to specific interactions and participants could evoke memories of their own households, prior interactions with performances of these events, or perhaps even confusion. From highly mediated events to daily interactions, *pita* and *shigra* emerge as linguistic and material sites for the multimodal production of women's collective memory in Napo. These performative uses of *pita* and *shigra* might seem fleeting in isolation, but they are connected to wider sites for the reclamation of women's knowledge.

Off-Stage Reclamation. Behind the scenes, organizations like the Association of Upper Napo Kichwa Midwives (AMUPAKIN) train young apprentices in cultural practices like producing *pita* and weaving *shigra* in preparation for regional cultural presentations and community tourism, as well as for their own knowledge. AMUPAKIN participated in several of *Mushuk Ñampi*'s live radio performances and other public events around Napo. One morning, I asked the midwives of AMUPAKIN to drink guayusa tea together to reflect on how their mothers had counseled them in the early morning hours. What emerged was a performance of the traditional morning hours, which extended the interactional frames usually available to performers during live radio broadcasts. The founder of the organization, María Antonia Shiguango, counseled one young woman for more than fifteen minutes, particularly reminding her that *pita* should never be in short supply and that it should be planted near the house. She emphasized the importance of *pita* for a woman's development, linking it to the fulfillment of a woman's gender role:

MA:	May pita kawchuna, may ashanga awana, shushuna awana, shigra awana, tukuyra yachana anmi.	[The girl] has to learn all of it, how to twist the *pita*, how to weave *ashanga* baskets, how to weave *shushuna* sieves, how to weave *shigra*.
	Shinakpi chigunara kasna tuta atarisha tiashami kanguna yachana an.	So, all of you have to learn these things, getting up before dawn like this and being [by the fire].
	'Na rakpi chigunara yachasha, chiga ali paktakta warmi tukun.	When she does that, when she knows those things, then she will fully become a woman.

Much like Olga, María Antonia checked the channel early in the exchange by asking her young listener, "Girl, are you listening?" And like Mama Olga, María Antonia spoke a distinctly Upper Napo variety of Kichwa to her adolescent listener, who responded that she understood. While María Antonia spoke, Serafina and her colleagues were also gathered around the fire, twisting *pita* and weaving *shigra* while young women observed and assisted them.

Organizations like AMUPAKIN, as well as the wide range of media events in which they participate in Napo, very often bring elders together with young people for events focused on learning language through culture, based in routines of listening and watching. Listening and watching, in turn, are two of the most significant ways young

people are expected to learn. At AMUPAKIN, I observed young women assisting their elders—and speaking with them—in tasks like producing *pita*, weaving *shigra*, and other gendered cultural jobs such as chewing pulp for fermented manioc *aswa* or tending the organization's small medicinal and food gardens. AMUPAKIN also includes several younger volunteers and apprentices, many of whom are reclaiming regional linguistic practices through their daily interactions at the center with elder midwives and the preparation they undertake for various performance and tourist events.

Although media production and performance events may seem ephemeral, the broader ecology of media in Napo has several important effects. Since my time in Napo, Rita Tunay, cohost of *Mushuk Ñampi* and former *ñusta* contestant, became prefect of the province, in part aided by her recognizability and public-speaking skills. The strengthening of women's political participation is one seemingly unexpected outcome of Indigenous media production. Likewise, the facilitation of new economic opportunities through media work, tourism, and the production of handicrafts might be other unexpected ways that Amazonian Kichwa people are employing media, more directly speaking to the goal of "holistic development" in the region. But what is most important, this ecology of regional media opened new spaces for multimodal and intergenerational interaction beyond texts and classrooms. Such spaces are sites to reweave indexical connections between communities, language, and lifeways in the service of reclaiming an identity many people thought was being forgotten.

Reweaving and Remembering More Than Language

Multimodal media and performance create opportunities to recirculate not just *language* but *embodied cultural practices*. For some young women, they can plant the seeds for future action as politicians or as mothers and homemakers. Not only that, such events have also emerged as their own cultural practice, connected to wider moments of media production and reception. *Pita* and *shigra* production provide a powerful organizing frame for remembering a significant form of women's environmental knowledge. In pageants and radio programs alike, participants attempt to reframe products like *pita* and *shigra* as the valuable items they once were, when they are now seen by many as outdated. Such practices also seek to interrupt oppressive economic systems that devalue handicrafts and handspun materials, as well as the people who make them.

Taken in isolation, the individual events of beauty pageants, radio shows, performances, or daily interactions at cultural centers might not seem like enough to return regional Upper Napo Kichwa to active use among younger speakers or to improve intergenerational interaction and transmission. Linguist Joshua Fishman once questioned whether the mass media were at all capable of revitalizing a language, as he saw them lacking necessary affective and interpersonal dimensions.[81] Such a view assumes the passive reception of media, without accounting for the often vibrant and productive relationships and communicative settings that arise around their production, reception, and circulation. It further assumes that daily use or the creation of newly fluent

speakers are the ultimate goals of all revitalization projects, as I once also thought. On the radio show *Mushuk Ñampi*, however, the hosts frequently claimed that the programs existed so that audience members would not "forget" their elders' knowledge. Their programs, and the interconnected mediascape of which they are part, were grassroots sites of "remembering" in the face of dismemberment of language. For Perley, remembering is more than just recall—it is also about "*remembering* the social relations that linguistic science has dismembered from indigenous languages."[82] Programs such as *Mushuk Ñampi* and organizations like AMUPAKIN brought together speakers, their language(s), and their embodied practices and rewove connections between them. This, too, was a form of reclamation of oppressed language and lifeways, directed by community members in response to their own history, knowledge, and goals. The reclamation of *pita* and *shigra* as significant cultural practices in the face of recent settler colonial disruptions to local languages, ecologies, economies, and interaction point to the ways that speakers of doubly oppressed languages like Napo Kichwa engage in reclamation of language that is always also about more than language. . . . Like other methods, there are limits, however, to such projects. Much of the media work in Napo, such as that organized through local municipalities, has been supported through funding from the Ecuadorian government, using the resources from the very oil extraction that has helped to drive environmental degradation, urbanization, and cultural change in the Amazon. Cultural organizations often support themselves through community tourism, welcoming visitors from the United States or Europe, who are very likely among those who consume fossil fuels and other minerals extracted from the Amazon. But decolonization should be at least partly understood as a process of reclamation, not an immediate solution. As Matthew Wildcat and colleagues argue, "If colonization is fundamentally about dispossessing Indigenous peoples from land, decolonization must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges, and language that arise from the land."[83] In the context of ongoing settler and extractive colonialism in the Amazon, these daily realizations of multimodal reclamation are hopeful and defiant acts against ongoing linguistic and social oppression that can reconnect people to land, traditional ecological knowledge, and embodied relationships, alongside their languages.

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11. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Michigan, with continuing review provided by Penn State University and Western Carolina University. Collective and institutional consent was sought from all major research sites (radio stations, community organizations), while individual consent or assent was obtained from all community members named in this study, including children. At the request of my interlocuters, I do not use pseudonyms, in recognition of the people who shared their knowledge with me.

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49. Luis Montaluisa, "La estandarización ortográfica del quichua ecuatoriano: Consideraciones históricas, dialectológicas y sociolingüísticas" (San Miguel: Pontifica Universidad Católica del Perú, 2018); Haboud and Limerick, "Language Policy and Education in the Andes."

50. INEC, "Base de Datos de Resultados del Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010 en el Software Redatam," *Censo de Población y de Vivienda* (Quito: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos de Ecuador: Centro Latinoamericano de Desarrollo Empresarial-Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe).

51. INEC.

52. Karolina Grzech, Anne Schwarz, and Georgia Ennis, "Divided We Stand, Unified We Fall? The Impact of Standardisation on Oral Language Varieties: A Case Study of Amazonian Kichwa," *Revista de Llengua i Dret, Journal of Language and Law* 7 (2019): 123–45.

53. Muratorio, *The Life and Times of Grandfather Alonso*, 2–3.

54. Muratorio, *The Life and Times of Grandfather Alonso*; Oberem, *Los Quijos*; Macdonald, *Ethnicity and Culture amidst New "Neighbors"*; Saúl Uribe Taborda, Patricia Bermúdez Arboleda, and Alexandra Ángel Penagos, "Reinterpretación del pasado fotográfico de la Misión Josefina con la Asociación de Mujeres Parteras Kichwas del Alto Napo (AMUPAKIN)," *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 72 (April 1, 2020): 70–85.

55. Macdonald, *Ethnicity and Culture amidst New "Neighbors*."

56. Pieter Muysken, "Change, Contact, and Ethnogenesis in Northern Quechua," in *Ethnicity in Ancient Amazonia*, ed. Alf Hornborg and Jonathan D. Hill (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 237–56; Oberem, *Los Quijos*.

57. Nicholas Limerick, "Kichwa or Quichua? Competing Alphabets, Political Histories, and Complicated Reading in Indigenous Languages," *Comparative Education Review* 62, no. 1 (December 21, 2017): 103–24.

58. Montaluisa, "La estandarización ortográfica del quichua ecuatoriano: Consideraciones históricas, dialectológicas y sociolingüísticas," 317–18.

59. Aurelio Colmenero-Robles, Alicia Bazarte Martínez, and Imelda Rosas Medina, "La asombrosa fibra de pita o seda mexicana," *Desarrollo Local Sostenible*, no. diciembre (February 10, 2020), https://www.eumed.net/rev/delos/35/fibra-pita-mexicana.html; Marie Julie Tremblay, "Contextualización de los préstamos léxicos de origen indígena," *Tinkuy: Boletín de investigación y debate*, no. 4 (2007): 77–96.

60. See Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, *RUNAKAY KAMUKUNA: Yachakukkunapa Shimiyuk Kamu*, 2009. *Pita* is a term widely used in contemporary Spanish to refer to agave or other plant fiber. In Napo, it refers to a plant of the genus *Aechmea* (Eduardo Kohn, *Natural Engagements and Ecological Aesthetics among the Ávila Runa of Amazonian Ecuador* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2002). Although the term is widespread in Spanish, I have yet to ascertain the provenance for the term in Kichwa. Arawakan languages were spoken in the Northern Andes prior to European contact (Matthias Urban, "Language Classification, Language Contact, and Andean Prehistory: The North," *Language and Linguistics Compass* 15, no. 5 (2021): e12414, https://doi.

org/10.1111/lnc3.12414; France-Marie Renard-Casevitz, Thierry Saignes, and Anne Christine Taylor, *Al este de los Andes: relaciones entre las sociedades amazónicas y andinas entre los siglos XV y XVII* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1998). It may be possible that the term represents substrate influence or processes of inter-Indigenous language contact that predate the arrival of Europeans. Further research is necessary.

61. Limerick, "Speaking for a State."

62. Muratorio, *The Life and Times of Grandfather Alonso*, 166–67.

63. Oberem, *Los Quijos*, 181.

64. Ibid., 184.

65. Ibid., 85, 105.

66. Ibid., 112.

67. Muratorio, *The Life and Times of Grandfather Alonso*, 28.

68. Eduardo Kohn, "Natural Engagements and Ecological Aesthetics among the Ávila Runa of Amazonian Ecuador" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2002), 253–54.

69. Maximiliano Spiller, *Historia de la misión josefina del Napo: 1922–1974* (Artes graficas Equinoccio, 1974).

70. Mark Rogers, "Spectacular Bodies: Folklorization and the Politics of Identity in Ecuadorian Beauty Pageants," *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (March 1, 1998): 54–85; Michael Wroblewski, "Public Indigeneity, Language Revitalization, and Intercultural Planning in a Native Amazonian Beauty Pageant," *American Anthropologist* 116, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 65–80.

71. Wroblewski, "Public Indigeneity."

72. Georgia Ennis, *Rainforest Radio* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2025), 160–69.

73. For reasons of space, I am not focusing on differences between regional and Unified Kichwa in this article. While the most common pronunciation among my interlocuters was "*pita*," I have found this word variously written as "*pitak*" or "*pitaj*." This may be indicative of hypercorrection, related to Unified Kichwa morpheme *-tak*.

74. The title of this song can be found both as "Pitaj Warmi" and "Pitak Warmi." The lyrics to this song incorporate some features of Unified Kichwa, particularlly the *-ta* object marker. In live versions of this song, the singer can also be heard pronouncing the object marker as *-ra*, when expected based on phonetic environment in Upper Napo Kichwa.

75. "Voice, Footing, Enregisterment," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (June 1, 2005): 38–59.

76. *Between the Andes and the Amazon: Language and Social Meaning in Bolivia* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018).

77. Wroblewski, "Public Indigeneity"; Rogers, "Spectacular Bodies."

78. Bernard Perley, "Living Traditions: A Manifesto for Critical Indigeneity," in *Performing Indigeneity: Global Histories and Contemporary Experiences*, ed. Laura R. Graham and H. Glenn Penny (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 32–54.

79. See also Juliet Erazo and Ernesto Benitez, "Becoming Politicians: Indigenous Pageants as Training Sites for Public Life," *American Anthropologist* 124, no. 1 (2022): 154–64, https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13676.

80. See Ennis, "Linguistic Natures."

81. Joshua A. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1991).

82. Perley, "Remembering Ancestral Voices," 258.

83. Wildcat et al., "Learning from the Land," i.